



Fundación Comunitaria del Bajío

~ Improving living standards through social and economic development activities ~

No. 15

Green Giant, S.A. de C.V. de México (Green Giant) and the Inter-American Foundation (IAF) are two of several partners who are co-financing a local development project managed by the *Fundación Comunitaria del Bajío* (FCB), a regional community foundation for the state of Guanajuato (IAF grant ME-433). The idea of a community foundation, an organization that addresses the development needs of low-income communities by creating a patrimony of human, material, and financial resources to be engaged by and for the community, is innovative in Mexican grassroots development. Even more innovative is FCB's approach in the city of Irapuato, which leverages the collective efforts of eighteen non-governmental organizations against financial support from the municipal government and the local private sector to ensure development problems are addressed with economies of scale.

With resources from Green Giant, the IAF, the municipal government and the local private sector, FCB, with thorough participation from the eight beneficiary communities, designed a social and economic development strategy that over the next three years will improve the standard of living of over 30,000 people in eight neighborhoods of the city of Irapuato.

Through community workshops, FCB and the beneficiaries identified various community, education and life-skill needs. With the project resources, training workshops will be offered in

teacher certification, primary literacy, recycling techniques, and low-cost nutrition and preventative health. In partnership with the Municipal Public Health Center, FCB is initiating a youth-focused preventative anti-substance abuse program with an emphasis on detection and prevention. Additionally, in response to beneficiary requests, workshops will be held on family violence behavioral modification.

FCB's economic development initiative was defined in response to the lack of economic opportunities available in the area. As such, FCB will undertake the construction and implementation of three community enterprises that will employ 30 people and provide 2,000 families with affordable pavement, blacksmith, and textile industry services. FCB will coordinate the installation and operation of a community savings bank and train people on strategic savings opportunities for health service, education, and family emergency needs. FCB also will conduct training in vocational skills in conjunction with the *Colegio Nacional de Educación Profesional* and provide job placement through local organizations.

The FCB is an innovative model of community-based local development. The FCB is active in nine municipalities in the state of Guanajuato, and the model has been studied by other states in Mexico interested in a sustainable mechanism to mobilize resources and engage new partners for community initiatives.

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